



OUTDOOR SAFETY TIPS

Sierra National Forest Bass Lake Ranger District

Each of the 155 National Forests in the United States offers multiple uses of its resources: wood, water, wildlife, forage and recreation. These activities may be different from your normal daily experiences. Plan for a safe visit to your National forest.

Be Prepared

List areas of safety to consider by "mapping out" your trip from start to finish. Along with your road map, list the variety of items, environments, personal, physical and safety needs you might encounter if everything goes as planned and/or if they do not (flat tires, changes in the weather, etc.). Some are:

- modes of transportation - how to get there
- current weather predictions for the area to be visited
- activities to be performed
- clothing to wear for each activity and for night time temperatures or possible changes in the weather (especially in the spring and fall)
- food to eat
- drinking water and water for the vehicle
- notify someone of your destination and expected return
- plan a stop at the local ranger station for current fire and recreation information
- first aid kit, emergency food and clothing
- proper safety gear for planned activities

Make sure that your transportation can get you there and back home. Carry snow tire chains for changes in the weather and road conditions. Many times it is sunny at home while higher elevations are having sudden, heavy storms. Jackets, long pants, blankets, boots and food snacks also come in handy for the trip home that might be delayed.

Make sure someone knows your destination, route, vehicle description, license number, occupants, expected return time and who to contact in case you do not arrive on time.

What to Bring



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important items is what to do if one should get lost or separated from the group: for children **and** adults remember to **stay put** and in your pocket or backpack,

When in the forest, remember to wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Walking in a variety of soils, rocks, pine needles, etc. can be hazardous in slick soled shoes. Long pants and shirts help protect skin from insects (mosquitoes) and plants (poison oak).

Be aware of changes in the weather and what proper measures to take should you get caught in a storm or if your vehicle should have mechanical problems. Have flashlights, blankets, jackets, drinking water, a variety of plastic sealable bags, garbage bags (make a hole in the bottom seam, and use as a rain coat or to help keep body warm), in the vehicle to weather the storm until help arrives. A first aid kit (with bee sting medicine) is needed. If you should get caught in a storm know the signs of hypothermia (the cooling of one's body temperature) and guard against it.

Know that cell phone signals are not readily found in the forest, so do not count on your cell phone to call for help.

Giardia and ticks

We ask that you "Pack Home" what you "Pack In" to the forest, but there are some things that you might want to be sure and leave in the forest. Two of these are: giardia and ticks.

Giardia is an organism found in many streams and natural water sources in the forest. Once ingested, it infects your intestinal tract causing flu-like symptoms. Avoid giardia by bringing your own drinking water or by treated (boiled) water from forest streams, creeks, springs and lakes.

Ticks are found in brush and shrubs. Lyme disease can be contracted through a tick bite. If bitten, save the tick and call your doctor. Bacteria is spread by ticks produces a skin rash, then aches and fever.

Hug a Tree

As with home fire drills, plan ahead and discuss with family members what to do for emergencies that might arise while in the forest environment. One of the most

carry a whistle and a plastic garbage bag. If you stay in one spot, *hug a tree*, you will have a better chance of

being found quickly. Signal for help with three of anything (shouts, whistles, claps).

Water Safety

Recreation activities that include water require special attention to safety. Some water dangers: people who do not swim; not knowing the water conditions, temperatures or depths; small children around water; underestimating distances to swim; overestimating one's swimming abilities; unsafe/ unskilled boaters; alcohol; wet, slippery rocks; not following posted signs; and swimming alone. All dangers can be minimized with proper safety items and common sense.

Campfire Safety

Use of camp stoves, barbecues, hibachis or campfire rings outside of designated campgrounds requires a campfire permit. Use of gas stoves is encouraged. If you build a fire, clear the area down to soil, build a small fire and never leave unattended. Have plenty of water available to put the campfire dead out.

Camp Cleanliness

Keeping a clean, litter-free camp reduces the chances of being visited by forest animals including bears. Keep food, garbage or other fragrant items (toothpaste, deodorant, etc.) tightly sealed in plastic bags. Use bear canisters or hang sealed plastic bags from trees.

Take home all that you bring to the forest. Pack wisely and eliminate extra packaging by condensing and repackaging items *before* you come to the forest.

Avoid setting up camp, sleeping by or stopping in or around rodent burrows. Rodent fleas carry sickness including the plague.

Poison Oak! Yikes!

And that's what you should do if you want to avoid the miseries of poison Oak! The "Leaves of Three, Let it Be" chant will help you remember the triple leaf pattern of the plant. The middle leaf has a longer stem while the side leaves have almost no stem at all.

Leaves come in a variety of colors - light, bright green in moist, shaded areas along streams and meadows, and in dry open areas, red and muddy green. Autumn turns all the leaves a beautiful, tempting bright red. Throughout their life, the leaves have prominent veins and a shiny surface.

All parts are poisonous - the roots, sap, branches, seeds and leaves and is particularly dangerous in the winter as the plant sheds its leaves making it practically unidentifiable. The smoke from burning poison oak is also hazardous.

If you come in contact with the plant, wash the area immediately with water and mild soap. You can be reinfected from contaminated, unwashed clothes. Pets can transmit poison oak to you. Many medicinal creams and lotions such as calamine lotion are available in stores. Severe irritations or ulcerations should be treated by a physician. Injections, drops or tablets taken before contacting poison oak can prevent or lessen the severity of irritations for many people. For others, nothing seems to work except staying completely away from the plant.

Off Highway Vehicles

For Off Highway Vehicles (OHV) be sure each driver is licensed by the State and that vehicles comply with State and Federal spark arrestor codes. State vehicle codes apply to all forest roads and vehicles. Drivers must be licensed and vehicles need a green sticker. Safe driving is very important on mountain roads, especially when driving OHV's. Know and follow local rules and regulations concerning OHV's, especially driving defensively

More Power!

Cutting firewood is also a popular activity. Permits are available at Forest Service offices. As with any power tool, there are many dangers with using a chainsaw. Take care in its use, knowing the safe ways to use it. Wear appropriate safety equipment, including leg covering (chaps), eye protection, and ear protection. Use other devices safely as splitting mauls, wedges, and mechanical splitters all can be deadly. Be careful to protect the forest against wildfire by having an appropriate and properly working spark arrester on the saw or generator, a shovel and a fire extinguisher.

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